

UNCLASSIFIED 06/03/76

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

TELEGRAM

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	FROM Amembassy BUENOS AIRES	CLASSIFICATION [REDACTED]
E.O. 11652:	GDS	
TAGS:	PFOR, PINS, PINT, AR	
SUBJECT:	Interior Minister Says There Is International Plot to Defame GOA	
ACTION:	Secstate WASHDC PROXEXY IMMEDIATE	ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044) U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS Margaret P. Grafeld, Director (X) Release () Excise () Deny Exemption(s): Declassify: () In Part (X) In Full () Classify as () Extend as () Downgrade to Date Declassify on Reason
INFO	Amembassy LA PAZ " MONTEVIDEO [REDACTED] BUENOS AIRES 3691	
REFS	(a) Buenos Aires 3641 (b) Buenos Aires 3642 (c) Buenos Aires 3664	
AMB DCM POL-5 POL/R ECOM RF CHRON SY LEGAT USIS	1. This morning's discovery of the body of former Bolivian (now officially confirmed) President Torres/, who was reported missing June 1, came not long after Interior Minister Gen Harguindeguy called an evening press conference (June 2) to charge that Torres' disappearance was part of an "international campaign to discredit Argentina's military government." 2. At the hastily called press conference, following his meeting with Pres Videla, Harguindeguy insisted Torres was neither arrested nor being detained by Argentine authorities and suggested Torres might as easily have disappeared "of his own free will". The Federal Police will investigate the case, he said. (Associated Press reported yesterday that Bolivian	

DRAFTED BY: POL:YThayer:cc	DRAFTING DATE 6/3/76	TEL. EXT. 121	CONTENTS AND CLASSIFICATION APPROVED BY: POL:WSSmith [initials]
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CLEARANCES:

USIS:MO'Brien (in substance) [initials]

A/DCM:WBeal [initials]

AMB:RChill [initials] (by phone)

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President General Banzer requested President Videla make a full investigation of the Torres case.)

3. Referring to Torres case and international press coverage of Michelini/Gutierrez Ruiz cases, Harguindeguy said there is no doubt an organized campaign exists, directed from outside the country, to discredit the present authorities and ~~obstruct~~ ^{obstruct} the process of national reorganization. (The Michelini/Gutierrez Ruiz cases and Torres disappearance were both covered--but very discreetly--by the local press.)

4. GOA, Harguindeguy said, is "no less concerned than the press about this problem of the disappearance of political personalities and prisoners." He reiterated the govt's "absolute repudiation of violence, of any extreme ideology."

5. Harguindeguy referred to press commentary, particularly in the foreign press, as "a total deformation of national reality". He said thousands of letters arrive each day, mostly from Europe, full of false information and requests for the liberation of people who have never even set foot in Argentina. The similarity of the letters, he said, supports his charge of a coordinated concerted foreign campaign to defame the country.

6. Harguindeguy refused to answer questions but added that the Federal Police and a Federal Judge were continuing investigation into abduction and deaths of Michelini and

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Gutierrez Ruiz, and that search continues for missing
Colonel Pita who was kidnapped May 30.

COMMENT: Harguindeguy's charge of an international
campaign has an overly defensive (indeed, almost paranoid)
ring to it and will not be well received by reps of the
or by other skeptical observers
foreign press/here. It does, however, at least indicate
concern at top levels over rapidly tarnishing Argentine
image abroad.

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